

Bird Dog

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Summary: Gibbs' team is assigned a case to bring down a criminal network and a high-ranking Marine, and Tony goes undercover to get the evidence they need. The situation changes rapidly, bringing Gibbs undercover to protect Tony, while Kate listens in, forced to remain an observer on the sidelines while her boss and her partner risk life, limb . . . and virtue. Season 1. Sexual situations.

1. Chapter 1

Notes:

First, please, if you expect the story to end with Tony and Gibbs in a relationship and you will be crushed if that doesn't happen, don't read. While I don't have anything against that pairing, I do not favor it in my writing.

Second, this is set in 2004, after Gibbs et al have met McGee, but before he has actually joined the team. It honestly seems a little odd to me that, in this situation, they would have brought McGee in specifically, but having McGee as an option, I couldn't see my way clear to using an OC. I do believe in using the resources canon provides before creating OCs. Besides, McGee is so cute in his 'puppy wanting to be kept' persona.

Third, this story was an experiment in not actually breaking sections between POVs. POV may, in fact, shift within a paragraph, and away again in the next paragraph. The only place you'll find actual section breaks are where there is a time or communication shift between the segments. What I mean by communication shift is that, through much of this story, characters that are separated by a fair distance and not in line of sight of each other are kept in communication by wires/earbuds that allow immediate, interactive speech. Thus, even though Kate is in the parking lot and DiNozzo's in the club, they are in the same scene by virtue of constant communication. To make it a touch simpler, there are only three POVs in the story, Gibbs, DiNozzo and Kate. I think it worked okay, though

I've never tried it again. It may be that the peculiar necessity of communication in this story made it work where it might not in another tale. It may be that I tend to pick my POV characters based on who will be separated most of the time, thus making this particular technique irrelevant._

* * *

><p>Chapter 1

Kate took another swallow of tepid coffee and adjusted the earbud in her ear. The third night of this surveillance, and it seemed finally to be getting somewhere. Tony's contact had invited him to stay at the bar after closing which definitely suggested that his hints had been picked up. She nestled deeper in her coat. Why was it always like this? Tony sitting plush and warm in a high class bar, drinking expensive alcohol and flirting with the waitresses, while she and Gibbs sat outside in a car on a snowy evening?

Tony finished making an obscene and possibly illegal suggestion to a waitress, and the woman laughed instead of slapping his face. "Are you drunk, DiNozzo?" Gibbs asked beside her.

In a voice Kate had to struggle to hear, Tony said, "No, Boss, just playing the part."

Gibbs snorted. "Right, DiNozzo. Did you get her phone number?"

"Yeah," Tony said, and Kate rolled her eyes. "But so would Tony Vellucci."

"You have a point there, DiNozzo," Gibbs murmured.

"Closing isn't for another half hour," said Albert Marino, Tony's contact. "You don't have to stay out here. You could move to a private room. You might be more comfortable there."

"No, stay in public as long as possible, DiNozzo," Gibbs said. Kate nodded.

"I'm good out here," Tony said with just enough of a happy lilt in his voice to hint at intoxication. "I like watching people."

"If that's what you want," Marino said, sounding slightly put out. Kate couldn't put her finger on it, but there was an odd vibe about the man. They knew he was gay, that was one of the reasons Tony was in there. A little bait to catch the man's attention and reel him in, and he had certainly dressed for the part. She doubted Tony showed that much chest when he went clubbing as himself. "Mikey," Marino said, "take good care of my friend here."

"Try not to drink any more, DiNozzo," Gibbs said when it was clear that Marino had moved off.

"How stupid do I look?" DiNozzo muttered. "Thanks, Mikey," he said in a normal voice. Kate could imagine him pretending to drink whatever drink he'd been given.

"Do you really want me to answer that, DiNozzo?" Gibbs asked. "That

outfit is . . . out there."

Kate snickered, but Tony made no response. He could only spend so much time muttering to himself without people wondering about him. She thought he was probably fuming internally about his inability to make any of the snappy comebacks that were undoubtedly coming to mind. Poor Tony, she thought with mock sympathy.

Inside the bar, Tony scowled. He found it irritating when his colleagues took advantage of his position to make fun of him when they knew he couldn't offer a defense. Yes, his clothing was outlandish, but to fill the role he was playing, his fashion sense had to be a bit edgy. The clientele of this place tended toward the trendy, and he was trying to stand out from the herd. That his 'out there' outfit had neither been purchased nor borrowed but created from an unusual combination of his own clothing worn in ways he'd never normally wear it was his own secret and would remain so if he could swing it. Kate teased him enough about his fashion sense as it was.

Marino was finally going for the bait, and it was about time. Tony just wished there was an elegant way to rid himself of his latest drink. He was running out of ideas. He could hold his liquor reasonably well, but since he'd spent a good two hours drinking with Marino and his buds in close quarters, he'd had more than enough to make him feel the slightest bit buzzed. Spilling it would not only be undignified, it would also be far too obvious, and Mikey, taking 'good care' of him, would undoubtedly replace it instantly.

He contemplated switching it out with the drink of someone nearby, but that would be hard to explain if he was caught at it. He knew a guy who'd gotten accused of trying to drug someone when he'd done that. He was relieved when the man next to him hit it off with the woman he'd been making up to and left. His drink was the right color, in the right glass, and it was about a third full to Tony's three-quarters full. Tony made the swap smoothly and hoped no one would notice that the level of his drink had dropped dramatically from one moment to the next.

Mikey came along a few minutes later, cleaning the bar, and he didn't seem to notice anything odd. A third full was also not empty enough to require a fresh drink, another plus.

The bar emptied out, the bouncer having to eject a few people who were too drunk to notice that it was closing time, but finally, Marino came over to Tony's side. Mikey had disappeared into the kitchen, and the bouncers had gone wherever bouncers go when things close down for the night. He and Marino had the bar to themselves. Marino leaned close. "So, you want to meet my associates?" he said.

"You said I'd have to meet them before we could do business," Tony replied, giving Marino a sidelong look. He wasn't their real target. They knew Marino was more a low end distributor than a real mover and shaker. While they were certain they knew who the next step up was, they would have to find real, solid, credible evidence to bring down a decorated Marine colonel.

"Well, I'd be happy to introduce you, but there are a few conditions."

"Conditions?" Tony asked, turning and raising an eyebrow. He'd expected conditions. The question was if he could meet them. His cover wasn't all that deep, and there were limits to the level of criminal behavior an NCIS agent could engage in without specific clearance from above.

Marino was looking at him oddly. Giving the nearly empty drink in front of Tony a glance, he picked it up and took a sniff. "What's this?" he asked.

"The whisky Mikey gave me," Tony said, not sure what all this meant.

Out in the car, Kate gave Gibbs a worried look. The question was off-script and she wasn't sure where it was coming from. Gibbs' eyes had narrowed, but he didn't say anything.

"Hmmm," Marino said, and his manner was making Tony a little nervous. He put the glass down, then turned and seemed to be about to walk behind Tony towards the kitchen, but he stopped abruptly behind him. With unexpected speed, he grabbed Tony's right wrist and cuffed him to what looked like a decorative railing on the bar, the cuffs coming seemingly out of nowhere. In the same moment, he slipped Tony's .38 out of its holster under his arm.

"Hey!" Tony exclaimed. "What's going on here?" He pulled on the cuff. It didn't look like police issue — it was exceptionally shiny, and there appeared to be some kind of an engraved pattern on the metal.

"Mikey!" Marino called, still right behind Tony.

"Cuffing me to the bar and stealing my weapon isn't a great way to start a business relationship," Tony snarled, aware that he had to let Gibbs and Kate know what was going on. He didn't quite know why Marino had done it, though, so he didn't give the danger word. They'd put too much work into this job to let it go easily, besides, SecNav was pushing Morrow for progress daily. Colonel Sullivan was suspected in fraud, embezzlement, graft and the deaths of two young marines, but he had friends in Congress and among the higher ranks that made it imperative to go at him indirectly.

"It's the only way we're going to start a business relationship, Tony," Marino said from close behind him, practically breathing down his neck. The bartender emerged, and he looked back and forth between Tony and Marino with a startled expression. "Did you give it to him?" Marino asked.

"I did." Mikey gave Tony a speculative look. "And I'd swear he drank it."

Marino reached around Tony and picked up the glass. "Is this it?" he asked, speaking almost into Tony's ear. Tony twitched away.

Kate was listening in growing alarm, wishing they had a camera feed on Tony. "Gibbs, what's going on?" she asked.

"You know what I know," he said grimly, his hand over the mike so that he wasn't transmitting to Tony.

"Should we go in?"

"He hasn't called us."

Kate grimaced. Tony had a tendency towards overconfidence, but pointing that out probably wouldn't get her anywhere.

Tony didn't like having Marino this close. He could smash him in the stomach, but he didn't have cuff keys on him, and the bouncers might not be all that far away. He'd better play it cool for now.

Mikey came over and took the glass, giving it a sniff. He glanced suspiciously at Tony. "No. Glenlivet, like always."

"What's going on here?" Tony asked, his voice hard with anger. "Are you going to uncuff me?"

"No, I don't think so, Vellucci," Marino said, handing the .38 off to the bartender as well. Mikey shrugged, took it, and went back into the kitchen. Tony's alarm was increasing, but he still didn't want to call the op. They wouldn't get another chance. "Why didn't you drink what Mikey gave you?" Marino asked.

If Tony were really Tony Vellucci, he'd be demanding release and insisting that there was no way he'd do business with this bastard, but he didn't know if he dared make such a play. If Marino agreed, they'd be worse off than square one. "I didn't want another drink," he said. "Okay? What's the big deal? What was in it?"

"Something that would have made the conditions easier for you," Marino said softly.

"What, you were going to drug me to meet your associates?" Tony asked. "Don't you trust me?"

"Oh, trust is something you earn in this business, Vellucci, and you aren't there yet," Marino said. "But no, it's not a matter of trust. You were never meeting my associates tonight."

"Then what the hell is this about?" Tony demanded, rattling the cuff. "What conditions?"

"You honestly think you can come into my bar, wave your ass around for three nights running, flirt and play hard to get, and not have your ass be one of the conditions?" Marino said, and Tony's eyes widened. He'd already turned down a pass, but Marino hadn't seemed to mind, and he hadn't made another one.

"I wasn't flirting," Tony said. "And all I'm interested in is a business relationship." Fingers on the small of his back made him flinch and turn around. He glared at Marino. "What did you try and give me?"

"Too late now, Vellucci," Marino said with a grin. "You only get one chance for the easy way."

"I'm not asking for your damned drugged drink," Tony snapped. "Let me out of this cuff, give me back my gun, and we can quit this right here."

Gibbs shook his head. They'd put a lot of effort into this op, a lot of resources. Tony hadn't used any of the words or phrases that meant he was getting out, so Gibbs knew he was bluffing, hoping to talk Marino out of the course of action he seemed to have chosen.

"It's too late for that, too," Marino said, and his voice sounded deeper than it had before. Gibbs wondered if he were closer to Tony's microphone. "I've been promising myself a piece of you since you showed up."

"Gibbs!" Kate hissed.

Marino kept talking. "Just relax and think of all the money you're going to make."

"I'm not playing along with this, Marino," Tony said, his voice low and determined.

"I've got three guys in the next room who will make you, and if you don't want to do business after that, well, fine." There was a pause during which Gibbs could only imagine what was going on " and what was going through Tony's mind. "But you aren't getting out of here till I'm done with you, so you might as well play the game."

Gibbs grimaced. Morrow would understand if they ended this right now and went in, guns blazing. Tony was clearly not getting out of there on his own. Still, they had a dirty Marine colonel to catch. Letting on that this was an op would make the man burrow deeper, and they might never find proof of his crimes. Tony clearly wasn't going to call it yet, but Gibbs wasn't prepared to let his agent be raped to catch the bastard, even if Tony were willing to go that far.

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2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Kate couldn't believe what she was hearing. Tony had to be crazy not to have called them in by now. "Gibbs, we can't let this happen," she said in an undertone. Then she watched in consternation as Gibbs suddenly dug out his wallet, badge holder and cell phone and tossed them on the floor by her feet. "Gibbs?"

He pulled his headset off and dropped it in her lap. "Remember, I won't be able to hear you. You'll only be able to communicate with DiNozzo."

"Gibbs, what are you doing?"

"Not letting this happen," he said. "Give me one of the drop phones we have ready for Tony."

Stunned, she dug one of them out. "What are you going to do?"

"My name is Gibson Jasper Howe. Get Abby working up a background on me. Make me borderline respectable, a former marine, I'll get the

details later." With that, he got out of the car and strode off towards the bar.

She stared after him for a long moment, utterly flabbergasted. Then she called Abby, trying to listen in on the progress of events while she explained what she needed to the Goth. One thing she knew for sure, Tony still hadn't called them in, so he was going to be a little startled when he saw Gibbs. She didn't dare say anything to him over the mike at this point for fear that Marino was close enough to hear the warning.

Though fear was threading through his belly, Tony still hadn't given up on talking Marino out of his insane proposition. If and when he did, he'd have to call the others in and hope he got out of here alive. Marino seemed to be enjoying the whole menacing thing and clearly wasn't in any hurry, so he had a few minutes to keep trying to change his mind.

"Give me a break," Tony said, going on the offensive. "You sound like a villain in a bad romance novel."

Marino's expression darkened. "Do I?" he asked, taking a step towards Tony who refused to quail back. For one thing, he knew he wasn't getting raped. The minute it sounded like Tony had lost control of the situation, Gibbs and Kate would be inside and dealing with things. He might get shot then, but not raped. Marino put his hand out to cup Tony's cheek, and Tony jerked sideways to avoid the touch. Marino grabbed the front of Tony's shirt and leaned close. "If you fight me, Vellucci, I'll call the boys in. I don't think you'd enjoy that."

Tony reached out with his free hand and shoved. "Let me go, you son of a bitch. I've got friends who won't like this."

Marino grinned. "You're going to tell your friends you got messed up by a fag?" he asked with a chuckle. "I don't think so." He brought his hand up and stroked the back of Tony's arm, bared by the rolled up sleeve of his D&G shirt. Unnerved slightly by this gentle response to his shove, Tony jerked his arm away, inadvertently bashing his elbow against the bar. Marino took a step closer so that there were only inches between them. In a lightning fast move, he whipped out another cuff and snapped it around Tony's left wrist.

"Son of a bitch!" Tony growled, jerking his left arm free and punching Marino in the face. The free end of the cuffs impacted slightly after the punch. The other man fell back with a curse, and Tony yanked on the cuff that was already attached to the bar. The railing was stronger than it looked, though. He kicked out when Marino came towards him again, to ward him off, but Marino dodged and came in with single-minded determination. He ignored Tony's legs and focused all his attention on Tony's left arm, shoving it back and cuffing it to the bar railing as well.

Kate listened with intense frustration. She hadn't been able to see Gibbs since he'd slipped around the corner to the bar's entrance, and all she could hear over the wire were the sounds of struggle. Tony was still growling and yelling, and he still hadn't uttered the words that should call her in. Now, though, even if he did, she wasn't sure what she should do. If she went barreling in now, she might screw up whatever Gibbs had planned.

"Gibson Jasper Howe, huh?" Abby said, and Kate nodded.

"Quick as you can. God knows how soon they'll take the time to check it, but Gibbs is going in now."

"Got it, Kate. What's up? Is Tony in trouble?"

Kate grimaced. "Yeah. Of course he is. It's Tony."

"What? What kind of trouble?"

"Not now, Abby," Kate said, listening to Tony's grunts of pain in her ear.

"Look, there's a chance of really good business here," Tony said suddenly. "But it's going nowhere if you don't uncuff me now."

"What makes you think I need your business, Vellucci?" Marino asked sardonically.

"Are you saying you're overextended? That you can't handle the extra trade?" Tony demanded, hoping that he could sting Marino's pride in that direction. "Or maybe you're afraid your associates will like me better."

Marino grabbed Tony's crotch in an agonizing grip, causing Tony's voice to choke off. He squeezed hard and then let go, and Tony, robbed of his hands, fell to his knees with a groan. Marino tangled his fingers in Tony's hair and forced his head back. Still gasping from the pain in his groin, Tony stared up at him in alarm. Marino smiled down at him maliciously and started unzipping his pants. Tony was trying to draw in enough breath to call the op when he heard a voice that made him freeze in surprise.

"Back off now!" Gibbs ordered. His voice was calm, but no less deadly for that, and Tony couldn't see him.

Marino turned, one hand in his fly, the other still gripping Tony's hair. "Who the fuck are you?"

"Back off or I will shoot you," Gibbs said, and Tony believed him.

Evidently Marino did as well. He released Tony's head with a snap that smacked him back against the bar and stepped away, doing up his fly as he went. "Who are you?" Marino demanded of Gibbs. "And what are you doing in my bar?"

"He's mine," Gibbs said, gesturing with his head towards Tony. Tony stared at him in shock. He didn't appear to be playing NCIS agent at all, and it wasn't his Sig he had pointed at Marino. It was his back up.

"What of it?"

"He's here for my business, not your pleasure," Gibbs said, crossing to Tony's side. He cupped Tony's chin and lifted his face, looking into Tony's eyes, never taking his gun off Marino. Apparently satisfied, he released the hold and turned back to Marino. Tony

stared down at the floor, heart beating fast. Gibbs was here, Gibbs had stopped it, but he hadn't ended the op. That added a whole new level of complication to the situation, but it still left them with a chance to catch Colonel Sullivan. "I thought you were a businessman," Gibbs said disparagingly to Marino. "Evidently I was wrong. I'll be taking my money and connections elsewhere."

"Wait just a minute," Marino said, now looking alarmed. "How did you . . . why did you come in just then?"

Gibbs gave Marino a disgusted look. "You really think I sent my boy in here without back up? With your reputation?"

"Thanks Boss," Tony said, his voice and breathing finally under control again.

"Shut up," Gibbs snapped.

"Yes Boss," Tony said, lowering his head.

Marino glared at Tony. "You didn't say you worked for someone else," he said accusingly.

A gentle hand on Tony's head stopped him from speaking. "I ordered him not to," Gibbs said. "It was a test. One you failed. I'll have to go with Corsely now." Tony saw where he was going, and grinned faintly at the floor. Corsely was Marino's chief rival. He was at roughly the same level, but in a different syndicate. Gibbs gestured with the gun. "Unlock him."

Marino looked down on Tony, an oddly calculating look in his eye. "Can't we come to some kind of an arrangement?" he said after a moment. "I didn't realize that I was poaching on claimed territory. Your boy is an incorrigible flirt."

"That was kind of the point," Gibbs said, but he sounded somewhat less hostile. In fact . . . Tony glanced up, hoping Gibbs didn't sound or look uncertain. He didn't, he looked calculating.

"If I'd know he was someone else's property, I would never have put the moves on him, but you can surely see the appeal." Gibbs nodded slowly. "Can I offer you a drink and maybe we can talk?"

"Give me a sealed bottle, and we'll give it a try," Gibbs said. "And unlock him."

Marino walked over with the keys and unlocked the cuffs. Tony wasn't really sure he wanted the bastard that close to him, but he was all business in the process. He took the cuffs and pocketed them, then turned towards the back of the bar. "This way," he said. Gibbs gave Tony a hand up, and Tony followed him, moving a little slowly. His groin was still none too comfortable. They went further back into the building, and Tony wondered what he should call Gibbs. Boss clearly worked, though it couldn't be all. He had to have a name picked out. Where was Kate? Was she still in the car, or was she running back up somewhere?

Gibbs followed Marino into a private room that had several chairs around a coffee table. It also had a private bar and a TV set with DVD player. He'd recognized an undercurrent of something he wasn't

sure how to handle in the way Marino was interpreting his behavior with DiNozzo. Apparently he'd laid claim to DiNozzo in a way that made the younger agent his property. Trying to play to that somewhat, he fixed DiNozzo with a stern look and pointed towards one of the chairs. DiNozzo, always sensitive to subtleties, immediately sat down without speaking. Gibbs turned to Marino and raised an eyebrow. "What exactly is there to talk about?"

"Business," Marino said.

"I thought you didn't need our business," Tony said snidely.

"Vellucci!" Gibbs snapped, and Tony subsided instantly. Gibbs turned back to Marino. "He makes a good point, though. You were willing to forego business with him."

"He is clearly not a senior player," Marino said, dismissing DiNozzo with a glance. "You are. So far as I was concerned, he was a bit player trying to seem important. I was willing to give him an intro, but he had to pay for the privilege."

"And I don't?"

"I think my associates would like to meet you," Marino said. Jutting his chin towards Tony, he added, "He would have been safer meeting them as my subordinate than as an independent."

"Subordinate?" Tony exclaimed, and Gibbs turned a glower on him. Tony rose. "I've had enough of this, Boss. We should just go."

"Sit down, Vellucci," Gibbs ordered, and Tony mastered what Gibbs assumed was a manufactured irritation and reseated himself.

"If you don't mind my asking, what's your name, sir?" Marino asked.

"Gibson Howe," Gibbs said, and he noticed DiNozzo's eyes flashing his way briefly. "Mr. Marino, after this demonstration, you're going to have to be very persuasive. I don't appreciate people touching my property without permission."

Tony flushed faintly and looked down. Having Gibbs talk about him like that made him feel very weird since it was quite evident now that Gibbs knew exactly what he was implying.

"I had no way of knowing he was yours," Marino said. "Please, have a seat. Can I get you a drink?"

"You can get me a bottle of good bourbon and a glass," Gibbs said, settling regally into a chair that had a good view of the room. "You'll forgive me if I don't want you serving me a drink after what you tried to do to Vellucci."

"It's a kindness, really," Marino said, bringing over a bottle of Maker's Mark and a highball glass and handing them both to Gibbs.

"Drugging the poor bastards before you rape them is a kindness, huh?" Gibbs replied with a twisted grin that made Tony wonder what he was

thinking. "Whatever." He opened the bottle and poured himself three fingers.

"Do you want me to give your boy a drink?" Marino asked.

Gibbs took a sip of his bourbon, then tilted his head and looked over at Marino. "I think I'll kill you if you ever try to give him a drink again," Gibbs said, his voice perfectly calm and conversational, but the expression on his face as he looked at Marino made Tony shiver internally. He was glad that wasn't directed at him. "Now, you had business you wanted to discuss."

Marino got himself a neat whisky and sat down across from Gibbs. That put Tony's would-be rapist less than three feet away from him, which did not make Tony happy. "Is what Vellucci told me about the opportunities he could offer accurate?"

"As far as it went," Gibbs replied.

Marino's brows went up at the implication that there could be more. "Then I really think I should introduce you to my associates."

"Your superiors, you mean?" Gibbs asked.

Marino flushed faintly. "I guess," he said, then he shrugged. "I've already made the arrangements for Thursday night, in anticipation of Vellucci's . . . cooperation."

Tony narrowed his eyes and glared at the bastard. If he hadn't refused that drink, Marino might have gotten a lot farther before Gibbs and Kate realized what was wrong. How many idiots had been tricked into Marino's clutches that way? There was no way they'd ever know, but if he had anything to say about it, Marino was going to prison as a rapist. He'd be real popular in there with that tag.

"Cooperation is an interesting word for it," Gibbs said, and Marino's eyes flashed with irritation. "Fine, Thursday works for me. Now, I can't imagine what else we have to talk about, Marino."

"I do have one question," Marino said. He stood up and walked around behind Tony. Not wanting to give away just how freaked out that made him, Tony feigned nonchalance, but then he felt Marino's hands descend on his shoulders, one of them sliding down to slip inside the front of his shirt. He froze, knowing he didn't dare respond without risking the new turn their cover had taken. "How attached are you to Vellucci? Is it personal, or is there any possibility of an exchange? I am doing a service for you, introducing you to my superiors."

Gibbs rose to his feet and loomed over Marino. He looked pointedly at the hand inside Tony's shirt. "How attached are you to your fingers?" he asked.

Marino removed his hands from Tony's person and stepped back. "Fine, I get it." Tony let out a discreet sigh of relief, feeling a bit like a bone being pulled between two alpha dogs. Fortunately for him, Gibbs was about as alpha as they came.

"What time Thursday?" Gibbs asked.

"Let's say ten," Marino said.

"Vellucci?" Gibbs ordered and Tony stood up and followed him out of the room. They exited the bar and headed around the corner to the car where Kate was waiting behind the wheel. Tony slipped into the back seat with a sigh of relief. The plan had called for him catching a cab, but the plan was shot to hell. Gibbs slid into the front passenger seat. "Kate?" he said, and she put the car into gear and took off.

3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Thursday evening, Tony stuffed his clothes into his bag, careless of what was crushed or wrinkled in the process. Not only had Gibbs refused to let him join him on the meet tonight, but Morrow had decided, in his infinite wisdom, that Tony should consult with a counselor. She had interviewed him, asked him a lot of ridiculous and unconnected questions, then nixed his involvement in the entire op. He had pled his case till the last possible moment, then, unable to cope with watching McGee suit up to be Gibbs' back up with Kate, he left the office for dinner.

Now he was packing up his gear from Tony Vellucci's hotel room preparatory to going home. He had a feeling that Morrow and Gibbs would frown on his coming alone, but it didn't exactly matter. All the key players were at the meet tonight. Now was the perfect time to clean out his part of the op. Besides, their story was that Vellucci was leaving town tonight, so his stuff had better go, too.

He shouldered the duffel and did a quick sweep of the room. He tended to spread himself around a place a little, and he'd actually stayed here a night or two early in the op for verisimilitude. He checked the bathroom and the closet again, then, satisfied, he headed to the door. When he opened it, he came face to face with Albert Marino, an enormous shiner of Tony's creation gracing his right eye. A second, lighter bruise marked where the handcuff on Tony's wrist had struck. Two of the bully boy bouncers from the club flanked him. The two bouncers were both broad, but one of them was fairly short, not above five eight or so. The other was taller than Tony.

He fumbled for his shoulder holster as Marino and his boys shoved him back into the room. They shut the door behind them.

"What the hell?" he exclaimed, not sure whether he was Tony DiNozzo or Tony Vellucci, but certain that he'd better figure it out soon.

"Does Gibson know you're leaving him?" Marino asked. Vellucci then. He ran his cover identity over in his mind, hoping he was getting the reactions right. The two bully boys converged on Tony and took the gun from his hand, tossing it on the bed. They grabbed his duffel and handed it to Marino, then shoved him face first against the wall to search him a little more thoroughly than he liked. They threw his back up weapon on the bed, too, then just held him against the wall. He was totally freaked out, but he kept it out of his voice and posture as much as possible.

"I'm not," Tony said, remembering the excuse Gibbs and Morrow had come up with to explain Tony's absence if he was missed. "He's got another job for me. Doesn't like to keep me idle."

"Ah, yes, you're his bird dog, right?" Marino asked. Tony sneaked a peek and saw that Marino was dumping his stuff out of the bag onto the bed. "None of his stuff's here. I'm surprised, I'd have expected you to room together."

"He has a room in one of the more expensive hotels," Tony said, knowing it for truth. "I'm here to suit my cover, and we spent the nights together there."

"So that's why you have no lube, no condoms, no nothing?" Marino asked, dropping the duffel on top of Tony's stuff.

"Why would I need them?" Tony asked, his heart rate speeding up faster and faster.

Marino waved at the guys who were holding him and they let him go, though they stayed on either side of him, ready if he tried to get away. Tony turned, putting his back to the wall, deeply alarmed by the situation, but miming comfort so as not to give himself to his enemies through body language. Regardless, there would be no Gibbs and Kate to come to his rescue this evening. Not even McGee, though he'd rather keep the kid out the way, really.

"What if you hooked up with someone?" Marino asked, walking towards Tony and stopping about four feet off, outside Tony's space bubble.

"I don't hook up with people," Tony replied, affecting an air of unconcern.

"You got the phone numbers of three waitresses, and I don't know how many patrons while you were hanging out in the bar," Marino pointed out. "How do you suppose Gibson would like knowing that?"

Tony grinned at him, a reaction that clearly startled Marino. "He loves it. It's a game, and phone numbers are a way of keeping score."

"Then it's a game you clearly play well," Marino said with a sly leer. "You could have gotten my phone number."

"Girls only," Tony said, disturbed by Marino's clear continued interest. "The Boss gets a little jealous."

"Yeah, I noticed that, so I was a little surprised when you didn't show up with him tonight."

Tony kept his face in a mocking smile with an effort. He'd known there was a reason he should be with Gibbs tonight, but he hadn't known how to explain why. "This job was already set up," Tony replied. "You think we were going to change our plans for the likes of you?"

Marino took another step forward. "I think maybe you should have. My boss wants a look at you."

"Well, Gibson doesn't make his plans based on what your boss wants," Tony said. "Back off now if you know what's good for you."

"Are you threatening me, bird dog?" Marino asked, taking another step.

"Gibson wouldn't like this, and I have my instructions."

"What are your instructions, bird dog?" Marino asked, clearly laughing at him as he took a final step that put him less than a foot away from Tony. "Hmmm?" the man asked mockingly.

Tony lashed out with a fist to Marino's jaw, and the fight that followed was embarrassingly short and most definitely not sweet. Tony wound up bent over the desk, his face pressed into the blotter. Handcuffs came out and he felt fear wind through his gut as he felt them close around his wrists. He couldn't see them, but he'd lay odds they were those pretty engraved ones. Someone, probably one of the bouncers, grabbed him by the upper arms, turned him around and forced him to his knees.

Marino walked forward and stroked his fingers through Tony's hair. Tony made to jerk away, but Marino's fingers grabbed, and he found himself forced to look up at the other man. Was this going where it had almost gone on Tuesday? Tony glared up at Marino defiantly so as to avoid shaking in his shoes.

"You are going to meet my boss tonight," Marino said in a matter-of-fact tone. Tony was breathing hard from the effort he'd expended, and Marino grinned evilly down at him. He bent and cupped Tony's chin in his hand. "Don't worry, Gibson will be there. I'm sure he'll be thrilled to see you."

Gibbs was going to have an apoplexy. The shorter of the bouncers left first, and Tony remained on his knees, only glad that Marino had walked away instead of trying to demand more than Tony was willing to give. After about five minutes, the taller bouncer pulled him to his feet and undid the cuffs. He then put his arm around Tony's shoulders and pressed a gun into Tony's ribs just at heart height. The combined volume of their winter coats neatly hid the weapon from casual view, but Tony knew that the thick layers of winter-weight fabric wouldn't stop a bullet.

The three of them went to the elevator, but it was past eleven on a Thursday night. The halls weren't exactly teeming with people. Even if he'd had the inclination, he wouldn't have had the opportunity to ask for help. The elevator let out in the parking lot, and the short guy had already pulled up right outside. Tony let himself be hustled into the car and wound up with Marino on one side and the bouncer on the other. The bouncer grabbed his arms and, turning him, forced his wrists together behind him. Marino cuffed him again.

"Is that really necessary?" Tony demanded.

"Maybe not, but it's sure fun," Marino said. He then added another thrilling touch. He placed a blindfold over Tony's eyes and Tony felt him buckle it tightly in back. He then stuffed a wad of cloth into Tony's mouth followed by a cylinder of rubber that was placed crossways, like a bit. It, too, buckled behind Tony's head. Once Tony

was blindfolded and gagged, Marino dropped his hand to fondle Tony's groin. Tony jerked sideways, trying ineffectually to get away, and Marino laughed. "It's too bad I have my instructions, too," he said regretfully, removing his hand.

When the car finally stopped, Tony had a suspicion that he knew where they were. He heard the car doors open, and the tall bouncer guided him out of the car. The way the sounds of their feet and the car doors opening and closing echoed told him that they were in some kind of parking garage. The club had external parking, so he began to worry.

They took him to stand between the two bouncers, one on each arm. The slight difference in the feel of the floor beneath his feet made him wonder, and then he heard elevator doors close. The club was all on one level, so there was no need for an elevator. Where the hell was he? Had Sullivan moved the meeting or was he going to get to meet Sullivan afterwards? No, Marino had said Gibbs would be there. Tony swallowed. And Marino had no reason to lie, did he?

Nobody knew where he was. Abby might be surprised that he wasn't hanging around the lab so he could listen in on the surveillance, and he would undoubtedly have gone there after he'd grabbed his stuff and cooled off a little.

His cell phone rang, and Tony knew a moment of fear. He didn't have Tony Vellucci's cell phone, he had Tony DiNozzo's phone. Or rather Marino had it. He shifted and Tony knew he was digging the phone out of a pocket. "Who is Abby?" he asked, but Tony couldn't answer him. Marino turned off the ringer without answering.

The elevator only went up one floor, and Tony wondered if the club had a basement. It might have a loading area, which could explain an underground garage and an elevator. They took him down some hallways and into a room where they sat him in a chair with his arms behind the back. Someone did something to the cuffs that hooked him in firmly so that he couldn't get out of the chair. Hands unbuckled the gag and removed the wad of cloth.

"Hey, what's going on here?" he demanded, but no one spoke. The chair didn't move as Tony struggled, so either it was heavy or it was bolted down. "Let me go, you sons of bitches!" he yelled, but, again, there was no response. Then he heard the door open, there were footsteps going out, and then the door closed after. He couldn't tell if he was in light or darkness. All he knew was that he was in trouble, and that Gibbs was in trouble by extension. And Gibbs probably didn't even know it yet.

* * *

><p>Please remember, reviews are love, and I'm feeling very needy right now. ;)</p>

End
file.